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INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE  
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RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 2867  
RUEHRL/AMEMBASSY BERLIN 0708  
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID 0091  
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS 0180  
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/OSD WASHDC  
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC  
RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA 1214  
RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE 3254  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK 2640  
RUEHNO/USMISSION USNATO BRUSSELS BE  
RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS  
RUEHLMC/MILLENNIUM CHALLENGE CORP  
RUMICEA/USCENTCOM INTEL CEN MACDILL AFB FL

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 03 BISHKEK 000131

SIPDIS

DEPT FOR SCA/CEN

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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [KG](#)

SUBJECT: MANAS, MOSCOW, AND MONEY: A PROPOSAL

REF: A. BISHKEK 123

[1](#)B. BISHKEK 96

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Classified By: Ambassador Tatiana C. Gfoeller, Reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) Summary. As we consider our options regarding Manas Air Base, Embassy Bishkek proposes one course of action that could allow us to retain access until 2011, in return for a commitment to close the Base that year. This would require both approaching Moscow and offering a significant compensation package to Bakiyev -- perhaps as much as a one-time payment of \$150 million. In return, such an option would allow us the use of Manas through the current troop build up in Afghanistan, and would buy us additional time to make alternative arrangements to replace Manas. End Summary.

[1](#)2. (C) As we consider our options forward regarding Manas Air Base, Embassy Bishkek offers the following for consideration. Despite Russia's public protestations to the contrary, it is clear that Moscow purchased Kyrgyz President Bakiyev's decision to close Manas. It is also clear that Bakiyev views the Base exclusively as a commercial commodity.

WE COULD BUY BAKIYEV -- IF RUSSIA ACQUIESCES

[1](#)3. (C) This has two implications. First, Bakiyev can still be bought, and should the U.S. offer him enough money, we could retain access to Manas. Second, however, Bakiyev has also shown that he is an unreliable partner, vulnerable to Russian pressure, who sooner or later will demand more compensation, regardless of the terms of whatever deal we might be able to reach now. Together, this means that if we are to extend our access to Manas beyond the six month notification period, we will need to reach both a political accord with Moscow and a financial agreement with Bakiyev. We will need both for an agreement to stick; securing one or the other alone will not be sufficient. Moscow has too many

levers to use to influence Bakiyev to allow him to extend the Base agreement against Moscow's wishes. And, even were we to gain Moscow's tacit acquiescence on retaining Manas, we would still need to come to terms with Bakiyev on compensation.

#### EXIT STRATEGY -- ON OUR OWN TERMS

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¶4. (C) Although the two variables in the Manas equation -- Moscow and Bakiyev -- complicate the issue, they do not necessarily preclude our ability to secure extended access to Manas, albeit at a cost. One possible formulation would be to approach both Moscow and Bakiyev and propose that we would like to negotiate the option to vacate the Base in June 2011, when the current protocol (negotiated in 2006) expires. (Note: We realize that Russia has consistently stated that it had nothing to do with Bakiyev's decision to close the Base. Without calling them out on this, we could simply state that we know they are good friends of Kyrgyzstan's and would appreciate their good offices in this situation. End Note) This is not cost-free to us; we would be committing to a date certain when we would leave Manas. But it would buy us time to get through the current plus-up of troops in Afghanistan and make alternative logistical arrangements to replace Manas.

#### WHAT RUSSIA WANTS

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¶5. (C) Such a proposal would give the Russians two things they crave: closure of the Base, and tacit acknowledgment that the road to Central Asia goes through Moscow. These may be insufficient incentives for Moscow to agree to our keeping the Base for two more years, and the Russians may seek other

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concessions. On the other hand, even now, it is likely that Moscow does not have complete certainty the Base will close. They, more than anyone, know the extent to which Bakiyev is open to the highest bidder. They must be wondering if the U.S. intends to match or even exceed the \$150 million Russia has pledged up front (and that Bakiyev intends to use to finance his re-election) and if Bakiyev can still be persuaded in such a way to keep the Base open indefinitely. A firm U.S. offer to leave in 2011 would remove this uncertainty. Second, by approaching Moscow, we would stroke the hubris that is driving Russia's effort to restore its hegemony in Central Asia. In accepting our proposal, Russia could demonstrate its commitment to support the Coalition effort in Afghanistan without acquiescing in an open-ended U.S. military presence in its back yard.

#### WHAT KYRGYZSTAN WANTS

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¶6. (C) Should Russia accept our offer, all we need ask of Moscow is that it remain neutral as we seek to come to terms with Bakiyev on compensation. Having secured our strategic rear with Moscow, our bargaining position with Bakiyev would be strengthened. Our proposal would allow Bakiyev to announce the closure of the Base, albeit in 2011. We would still need to make a significant financial offer to Bakiyev -- perhaps as much as a one-time payment of \$150 million in return for two more years' access. With Moscow no longer pressuring Bakiyev to close the Base, however, he would be free to strike a deal. In addition, Bakiyev would have much more confidence in a compensation pledge from us than he would in the vagaries of the Russian deal.

¶7. (C) The Russians might reduce their offer somewhat (us leaving in 2011 might be worth less to them than in 2009), but may be reluctant to pull it off the table completely lest they burn their bridges with Bakiyev and because it is actually inherently advantageous to them for other reasons (control of the Central Asian water supply through Kambarata 1). Even so, if the U.S. pledge provided the money Bakiyev wants for his political purposes in a timely manner (i.e., in

time to use for his re-election campaign), he could accept a reduction in the Russian offer. As with Moscow, Bakiyev could justify his decision not only with the increased compensation, but also as a demonstration of his continued support for stability in Afghanistan.

COMMENT

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18. (C) The advantages to this approach include that everybody could "save face." Even if Bakiyev agrees to keeping Manas open through June 2011, the Kyrgyz can still feel that they "showed their sovereignty" by insisting on a date-certain for our departure. The Russians could also take internal credit for hastening our departure and gaining a date-certain. Whatever the outcome of the negotiations, we would have handled the situation on our terms, not Bakiyev's or Moscow's. If the negotiations succeeded, we would buy ourselves time to find (and perhaps conclude infrastructure upgrades at) an efficient alternative to Manas. And this being Kyrgyzstan, in 2011 Bakiyev could even reverse course and ask us to stay longer. Or there could be a new President in power, presenting new opportunities to retain the Base.

19. (C) The above strategy only makes sense, however, if we assess that it is worth perhaps as much as \$150 million to gain two more years' access to Manas, and that is not a judgment we can make from here in Bishkek. We should also keep in mind that there might be political blow-back from giving this (admittedly corrupt and authoritarian) government

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a heavy infusion of cash. Having a date-certain when such infusions of money will cease could help in this context as well. Additionally, we would not recommend waiting indefinitely for a "deal" with Russia before beginning negotiations with the Kyrgyz -- if such is our decision. That would be giving the Russians too much power and an incentive to run out the clock on us. The two approaches could be done in parallel fashion. The bottom line: absent some course of engaging both Moscow and Bakiyev, we judge that the Kyrgyz will follow through and formally notify us of their decision to close the Base, starting a six-month clock that will see us out of Manas by year's end.

GFOELLER